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Pattern Cutting for Men's Costume. By ELIZABETH FRIENDSHIP. London: A&C Black Publishers Ltd, 2008. 220 pp., approx.150 col. illus. £19.99. ISBN 978 1 4081 0006 6

The appearance of a book dedicated to the practical art of pattern cutting for men's costume is to be welcomed. Although there is a significant literature addressing the cutting of women's period dress, men's historical clothing has not been so well served. The book tries to provide solutions and cutting guidance for clothes from the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The author states that beyond this period, for more recent times, men's clothing becomes significantly more shaped and tailored and is beyond the scope of the present book. Similar authors that one might reference for comparison are R.I. Davis and Jean Hunnisett; the former producing a book of pattern cutting diagrams for seventeenth and eighteenth century male clothing and the latter a series of highly popular cutting guides to women's dress of these same periods. The Hunnisett books are valued for their reliability, much like a Delia Smith cookbook, producing an acceptable version of period dress. Sadly, she never produced anything as detailed for men's clothing. The R.I.Davis book's defect, to my eyes, is that visually it is rather piecemeal, and the clothes are rather square-cut, with modern looking armholes and sleeveheads. They lack many of the accents of authentic period clothing.

This book is visually handsome, with clear cutting diagrams and many colour illustrations from period portraits. There is a uniformity of visual style which makes it easy to reference. The text is clearly and spaciouly printed; it is easy to move between instructions on the page and work on the table, without losing one's place.

The range of examples is considerable. There is both elite and non-elite clothing. The elite examples are clearly drawn from examples featured in other books (Waugh, Arnold), that is they are based on real historical models. The dress of the non-elite is, of necessity, more of a conjecture, based on close scrutiny of figures in paintings of the period.

As this is a technical book, I felt it only fair to try some of the pattern cutting instructions. Following the book, I drew up patterns for a basic body block and a trouser block, using measurements representative of a young man (my son agreed to model). I compared these with the table of values given at the beginning of the book and there was a good correspondence. I then made up the patterns in calico and my son tried them on. In general, both upper body block and trousers fitted well. The close fit of the former suggested that allowances would need to be made for weight of fabric and interlinings and linings, by increasing the amount of ease calculated during the patterns construction. In fact I noted that the draft for a doublet, later in the book, seems to make allowance for this, although it doesn't explicitly say so.

In summing up there are a number of things I feel I should say. The book could have done with closer proof-reading as there are places where text has been duplicated or a key letter missing from a diagram. To the novice, these small things can be very confusing. Patterns are not necessarily illustrated with an example of how they will look when made up; the pattern for 17th century breeches with flounces (or Rhinegraves) is included, probably because it is developed from a pattern in Waugh's Cut of Men's Clothes, but despite its complexity, is not illustrated with an example. I should also say that for those interested in clothing for period re-enactment, many of these garments have squarer, more contemporary lines. This system works well for many garments, but not all. The breeches are not cut with the legs apart, with the consequent baggy seat necessary for sitting on horseback. The late eighteenth century coats do not have the strongly bowed fronts that cause the coats to curl around the body and throw the skirts to the back. Because the clothes are derived from pattern blocks, these subtleties of period dress have been ironed out. But where a less rigorous, historically-inflected costume is required, for example, the opera stage, then this book has value. In fact, for the basic blocks and the measurement tables, and the many useful pieces of practical advice it contains, this book is worth the price of admission. I think that if I were a younger person looking for guidance on cutting to fit, I would have been very grateful to the author for making her system available. With experience, the

assiduous student could learn to use this system to generate workable patterns with a stronger period style.

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